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ABSTRACT

Since 1928 when women represented 55% of all elementary school principals, the number of women in educational administration has been declining. In addition to historical trends which brought more men into the education profession, two factors hinder the promotion of women to administrative positions. The first factor is perceived barriers (internal). Women tend to perceive the probability of moving into educational administration as low and thus do not aspire. These barriers could be overcome by changing women's attitudes, life priorities, and/or capability concept. Other barriers (external) seem to be present in the field of vocational education and would be amendable to some educational efforts and to more formalized affirmative action. A second hindering factor is the method of assessing administrative competencies. Since some women's career patterns are different from those of many men, their skills development may also take shape in different situations. These skills may be difficult to assess in traditional ways. Assessment approaches can include typical essays, paper and pencil tests, group discussions, simulations, work samples, and content analysis. Experiential competencies can be assessed by experience checklists, descriptions of experiences, and documentation of accomplishments. (A list of external and internal barriers rated by a group of vocational education administrators, teachers, and students is included.) (JH)

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ASSESSING COMPETENCIES FOR ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS

A paper presented at the American Personnel and Guidance Association, National Vocational Guidance Association, March 21, 1978, Washington, D.C.

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ASSESSING COMPETENCIES FOR ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS

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Education is big business. In the fall of 1975, education was the primary activity of some 62 million Americans: about 59 million students, 3 million teachers and one-third of a million staff members. In the 17,000 school districts, less than 1% were directed by female superintendents in 1970-71. High schools had 3% and elementary schools 21%, respectively, headed by female principals (NEA,1973). Only 2% of professors of educational administration were women (AASA,1975). These figures become important when one notes that 67% of the public school teachers are female, that women hold nearly 21% of the masters' degrees and 8½% of the doctorates in educational administration (Lyon & Saario, 1973).

Each year jobs in administration become open. Yet, since 1928, when women represented 55% of all elementary school principals the number of women in administration has been declining steadily (AASA,1975; Lyon & Saario,1973).

The reasons for the decline are hidden in other historical trends. During the Depression, many school boards refused to hire women in teaching or administrative positions in an attempt to limit income to heads of households. Following closely upon this trend came the end of World War II and the influx of men into college, under the sponsorship of the subsidies in the GI Bill. Many of these men entered the education curriculums, and in turn, the public schools. As both historic events brought more men into the teaching profession, the status of teachers rose (AASA,1975). As men gained teaching experience, it soon became the unwritten policy of many school districts to replace retiring female principals with men - to the extent that male principals came to be hired from a pool

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with less experience than that held by women capable of moving into administration.

The disappearance of the women educational administrator can also be traced to many more less evident but still damaging factors hindering the promotion of women.

1. The first factor is that of aspirations - the aspirations of women tend to be inextricably intertwined with anticipated barriers - women tend to see the probability of moving into administration as low and thus do not aspire (Wiedermayer & Kramer, 1974).

2. The second factor is that of the question of women's qualifications. Men in charge of hiring and promotion frequently claim they cannot find qualified women. Since women's career patterns are different from those of men (Disabatino, 1976), the development of skills also may take shape in situations that are different from the skills developed on the job in paid work experiences. Unpaid work (such as homemaking) and volunteer work in the community both provide a series of opportunities for skill development in competencies necessary for serving in educational administrative positions. It is hard for those people wishing to implement affirmative action policies to assess such competencies in traditional ways.

Not only are administration competencies important, but in vocational education administration, candidates in many states must also have had certification in a subject matter (service area) that also requires work experience (Ramp, 1974). Some states allow successful completion of an occupational competency examination (either local or one from National Occupational Testing Institute) to substitute for part of the work experience, or allow the professors at an "approved" program at a college to certify work experience (Kane, Fernandez, & Godoff, 1977).

Kane and her colleagues (1977) did note: Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics study of the characteristics of vocational education personnel in 1972 reveals that there were many more teachers of male-intensive

occupations (that is, where there were more male students) with little or no work experience than certification requirements would suggest (p.19). So, the supply-demand picture and subjectivity of those doing the hiring admittedly enter into the picture.

These two factors, perceived barriers and nontraditional assessment of administrative competencies, have been addressed in a Vocational Education Research grant at Kansas State University this year (Neely & Wilson, 1977).

First, let's look at barriers that can be incorporated into programs that can be used in a needs assessment to structure a program to overcome them.

Barriers

In reviewing the literature dealing with barriers to women entering vocational administration, it became clear that two categories of barriers existed. Some of the barriers seemed to be coming from the women themselves and could be overcome by women changing their attitudes, life priorities, or capability concept. Other barriers seemed to be present in the field of vocational education, presenting road blocks to be dealt with by women moving into administration. The project staff decided to treat the barriers to women entering vocational administration as two aspects, internal and external.

Support for considering barriers as external factors and internal factors that may interact to inhibit women from engaging in achievement-directed behavior necessary to ensure promotion into managerial positions was given by O'Leary (1974). From a review of literature, she found that internal psychological factors included fear of failure, low self-esteem, role conflict, perceived consequences of achievement-related behaviors, and perceived incentives for achievement-related behaviors. External psychological factors included societal sex role stereotypes and societal attitudes toward competency of women.

The American Vocational Journal, November 1974, specialized in articles addressing the theme "professional opportunities for women in vocational education." In this issue Kievit (1974), King (1974), and Simpson (1974) considered barriers such as women's willingness to accept the status quo, the role conflict involved

in merging home and career responsibilities, how perceived advancement possibilities by women, lack of acceptance of women by some male faculty and male administrators, predominance of male hirers, women's refusal to compete for top jobs, and doubts by men of women's full commitment to a career. Jerdee and Rosen (1976), in a speech presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, saw many women were weak in career commitment due to family responsibilities, life-style considerations, and the financial problems involved with acquiring additional training or education. Several relevant considerations included the variety of women's career patterns compared to men's and the role-overload women may face in combining career, family, and schooling.

Neidermayer and Kramer (1974) in a position paper for the Recruitment Leadership and Training Institute point out that women lack role models in administration. Contributing reasons may be the school systems' inability to distinguish women preparing for administration and the women's social conditioning to not aspire where they feel unwelcomed. Silvers (1976), besides considering many personal characteristics and societal trends, noted the "old boy network" which serves as entry into administration, home responsibilities' interference with travel and group experiences, the social isolation of women in leadership positions, the risk orientation needed for administration, and the preference by both sexes for male supervisors. Zucherman (1976) who restructured, reviewed, and clarified research in the areas of women's career commitment, educational aspirations, non-traditional career goals and choices, and feminism considered many personal characteristics in her review. But in her review she found that women in non-traditional fields have higher aspirations toward administration. Women also tend to have a lower self-esteem than men.

Frank and White (1977) in their EPDA Project Final Report 1976-1977 on

New Opportunities in Vocational Education pointed out that for vocational administration women need the ability to live with isolation at the top, to make informed decisions, to be flexible, to hire and fire, to manipulate within the administrative informal structure, and to be willing to take active roles in professional fields. Because of the technical emphasis in vocational education, women wanting to become administrators also need to be able to show high levels of initial job competence, demonstrate knowledge of equipment in each major area, plan in terms of one and five years, be aware of and deal with the overwhelming bias of the traditional male vocational education teachers against women in positions of authority over them, be willing to go back to school for administrative degrees, and be willing to acquire five years of related experience outside of education for acceptance as administrators.

Barriers found in the literature but not included in our literature review list were those that tended to involve personal characteristics, societal trends, or psychological interplay between people.

Incorporated into the two barriers list from the review of literature was the list from personal interviews conducted in the field.

Finally, a board of judges was asked to judge the relevance of the list to the vocational field and to measuring barriers to women entering vocational administration. The two lists are shown on the next page.

Percentages, means, and standard deviations are shown for randomly selected groups of vocational education administrators, teachers, and students (N=221) in Kansas last fall. The choices were scored from "1" for absolutely to "5" for never, so a lower mean is a higher rank. We also asked for the three most important in each list, collapsed the top three choices, and found virtually the same ranking distribution in number of times chosen in the top three.

Proseminars, courses in leadership assessment and training, workshops for support groups and assertiveness training, classes in educational governance and budgeting and personnel can help overcome internal barriers. External barriers will be amendable to some educational efforts and to more formalized affirmative action search committees.

TABLE 1

WOMEN'S INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ADMINISTRATIVE POSITION BARRIERS BY PERCENT RESPONSES, MEAN, STANDARD DEVIATION, AND RANK

ITEM	DATA ANALYSES									
	PERCENT REPLIES[a,b]								RANK[c]	
	BASIC.	USUAL	OCCA.	RARE.	NEVER	NO RE	$\bar{X}$	SD	R	3[d]
INTERNAL										
1. family responsibilities	23	44	25	4	0	3	2.1	.82	1	4
2. necessity of a 12 month job	10	28	42	16	<1	4	2.7	.89	3	2
3. need to make "tough" decisions in administration	5	15	38	32	4	3	3.1	.95	8	8
4. administrative responsibilities in the evening	14	28	38	14	1	4	2.6	.95	2	1
5. low commitment to career advancements	7	14	44	28	3	4	3.1	.92	8	6
6. travel commitments required for administrators	5	24	42	24	2	4	2.9	.90	5	5
7. necessity of further graduate studies for certification	5	23	41	24	3	4	3.0	.90	6	7
8. unfamiliarity of budgeting and financial responsibilities	10	26	38	20	2	4	2.8	.98	4	3
9. prospect of hiring, evaluating, and firing of staff	6	17	38	30	4	4	3.1	.96	8	9
10. necessity of developing long range program guidelines	2	11	37	39	7	4	3.4	.87	11	11
11. fear of isolation found in administrative role	4	14	38	34	6	4	3.2	.93	10	10
EXTERNAL										
1. lack of ability to talk the language of commerce and/or industry in establishing and maintaining commercial contacts	7	20	47	20	4	3	2.9	.91	11	10
2. lack of criteria for crediting women for competencies achieved in unpaid/volunteer work experience	12	26	34	20	3	5	2.7	1.01	9	8
3. lack of experience in more than one service area	9	39	34	13	2	2	2.6	.91	6	5
4. lack of public acceptance as a top administrative representative	18	41	27	10	2	2	2.4	.96	4	2
5. lack of acceptance as an administrator by craftsmen in traditionally male areas	33	39	19	6	1	3	2.0	.93	1	1
6. lack of women in higher level Vocational Administration positions to serve as role models	24	35	29	10	0	2	2.3	.94	2.5	3
7. lack of previous managerial/administrative experience in a commercial/industrial setting	17	48	25	8	<1	2	2.3	.85	2.5	11
8. lack of criteria to evaluate qualifications of women possessing an interrupted career pattern	10	31	41	14	<1	4	2.6	.87	6	9
9. lack of obvious systematic methods by the school for identifying women aspiring to administrative posts	13	31	36	15	1	4	2.6	.95	6	7
10. lack of awareness of the political maneuvers necessary within the administrative structure	17	21	36	22	2	2	2.7	1.07	9	4
11. lack of acceptance by staff members when handling school plant management	10	29	41	14	3	3	2.7	.95	9	6

[a] N=221 vocational administrators, teachers, and students from a stratified random sample in Kansas, Fall, 1977

[b] Percents may not add to 100 due to rounding

[c] Some tied ranks will be observed

[d] Respondents were asked to list the top 3 contributors and these lists were combined to derive those named most often for this set of ranks - the first column of ranks is derived from the means given

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Having a particular pool of female students or teachers reply to ratings of barriers provides structure to course and workshops programming objectives to assist women to overcome acceptance of barriers.

NONTRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT

The second factor is the need for using nontraditional approaches to assessing competencies. These can take the form of already standardized paper, process and product assessment. For example, Breen and colleagues (1977) listed some techniques:

1. Topical essays
2. Paper and pencil tests
3. Group discussion sessions
4. Simulations, such as Leaderless Group Discussions
5. Work Samples, such as In-Basket
6. Content Analyses

and that these might be used as validation techniques with each other and with a guide to aid the development of a portfolio of administrative competencies. To establish a procedure for demonstrating experiential competencies analogous to those in paid work experience, our project has adapted some of the principal techniques of the Center for Assessment of Experiential Learning:

1. Experience checklists
2. Description of experience
3. Documentation of accomplishment

Essays and paper and pencil tests (see list in Wisconsin's Freedom for Individual development: A Model, Simpson, 74) are self explanatory.

The Leaderless Group Discussions (Knapp & Sharon, 1975) find that the "ability to work in a group situation is difficult to judge validly via questionnaires, letters of recommendations, interviews, and paper and pencil tests. The LGD seems to fill this assessment gap and is probably the most economical work sample of group behaviors."

Further, the authors (in a Compendium of Assessment Techniques) note that simulation "offers the assessor the unique opportunity to observe and evaluate a

performance in a lifelike setting that often cannot be assessed by other means (p. 13)." "Complex skills such as analytical thinking, goal setting, risk taking interpersonal competence, dicision making, sensitivity to the behavior of others, oral communication, and planning can be assessed using these exercises (p. 44)." The cost in personnel time, facilities, and resources are handicapping considerations.

Likewise, Knapp and Sharon find that "although the In-Basket test is expensive to give and score, it is an appraisal approach that has a great deal of face validity, so that it appears to be a fair and realistic sample of a job (p.21)."

Assessment Centers have been set up in several places. "Studies to determine the contribution of individual techniques reveal that an overall, global assessment rating given to assessees by the assessment team is a better predictor of job success than any single measurement component." (Knapp & Sharon, 1975)

Where such measures are not possible, then the Guide becomes doubly important. The Guide, under development and validation at Kansas this year, will enable women to document administrative competencies in the same way that experiences can be submitted for college credit. Previous research would suggest that more than one rater will be needed in order to obtain a pooled rating. As Willingham said:

> "Research indicates that judgments of different assessors can vary considerably systematically if they have limited experience or if assessment guidelines are not clear...it is advisable, therefore, for institutions to use multiple assessors until experience indicates that learning can be judged with acceptable consistency (by assessors working independently) (p.23)."

The bibliography will give you the resources for examining these measures.

Copies of the Guide and Manual are available from Dr. Neely after August 31, 1978.

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